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THE POLITICAL EFFECT OF THE MESSAGE.

To the close observer of events there has been in the phenomenal public career of Grover Cleveland nothing more marked than his swift development into a politician of the highest order. In the progress of every great reform it is probably inevitable that there should be much cant. The enthusiasm of zealots has, as doubtless no other force could, wrought a very great and a very needed change in the administration of our public affairs, but it has tended at points to destroy what it essayed to build up. In making the term politician odious, it has crippled the hand of the man of affairs, who alone can work out the results of theory.

Eight years ago President Cleveland was a not particularly conspicuous lawyer of Buffalo, with probably little political ambition, and certainly no apparent prospect of a political future. He was a remarkably conscientious lawyer though, and devoted himself to his law books largely to the exclusion of reading matter of any other sort. When, for instance, he was nominated for Governor of New York in September, 1882, it may reasonably be asserted that he had never read a book upon political economy, and that the intricacies of the tariff question, as applied to this new country, with its entirely novel requirements, were to him as mystical and unsought as the resultants of the dreams of Swedenborg. That was six years ago. The other day he wrote a message concerning the tariff, upon the broadest lines of the great subject, and expressed his views in such simple and straightforward fashion as implied the fullest knowledge, and, apparently, the closest study of every authority. It is he only who knows a subject *à fond* who can write of it simply.

Nor had Grover Cleveland occupied himself up to that date of eight years ago with the study of men, except as they presented themselves to him in groups of twelve. Following that date he was made Mayor of Buffalo. The broader and new opportuni-

ties seemed to him at once an inspiration. His communications to Councils became familiar to us all in that heated contest of 1884. They were appeals, over and beyond Councils and Rings and Political Machines, to the great mass of the people. And he carried the people with him.

So, when he was named as a candidate for Governor in the chaotic state of political affairs that confronted the people of New York in 1882, this quality of mind and indifference to the political machine, as opposed to the interests of the people, made him easily the candidate of the party. Samuel J. Tilden, the ablest politician this country has ever produced, was already a recluse at Greystone. It is doubtful if Mr. Cleveland knew him, or his processes of mind and action, except by general hearsay; but, whether or not he had learned the lesson of political success from that able leader, he has conducted himself upon that leader's one line of conduct—that what is right, with absolute certainty wins in the end. As Governor he followed this course of action with straightforward determination, and appealed at every exigency from the Machine of the Legislature and of the Metropolis to the million of citizens. His quality as politician it was that taught him what the people wished, and he responded to it with acute intelligence and entire courage.

Inaugurated President, Mr. Cleveland, at the beginning, departed somewhat from his instincts as leader. He was elected as the exponent of certain principles. In the sense of executive officer as to the mere machinery of government he was expected to be “the President of the people, not of a party.” But, as representative of the expressed desire of the people for a change from a policy and methods of which they disapproved, it was his duty to see to it that by every legitimate means the change was made permanent. As a Democrat and representative of the principles of the Democratic party he could, loyally to himself or to Democratic principles, make no compromises whereby those ideas of government could be overthrown by the triumph of the opposing party. Robert Toombs, impulsive always, and misguided through a fateful period, but always a pure patriot at heart, was addressing a gathering of his fellow-citizens after the disastrous result of the election of 1872. “They say,” he cried, “that the Democratic party is dead. When you come back from the funeral, my friends, take not off your habiliments of mourning, for you will need them at the

death-bed of the Republic." A partisan and hostile postmaster in the city of New York in 1884 would have brought about the defeat of the Democratic party. In the selection of his officials of great influence throughout the country, therefore, it seems an axiom not worth discussion to those who believe in the principles of the party that a Democratic President should choose lieutenants for the influential public offices entirely and with enthusiasm in accord with the principles he represents. As a loyal representative of those principles, he could but select men of such character as would serve the people with as entire fidelity in official matters as they should serve their party in political.

But, again in touch with the expressed sentiment of a majority of the people, President Cleveland has re-asserted himself as the exponent of their thought and the director of their action. It seems now that nothing short of his death or a misadventure hardly to be considered in view of his past will prevent his being again the candidate of the party. Yet his tariff message, only a few weeks back, was a bold and direct proclamation of a principle which, although truly the very foundation rock of the party, has been in effect denied by it for nearly a quarter of a century. As leader of his party, then, and politician, did he err in the matter of expediency? As statesman, expressing clearly, forcibly, and truly the cardinal principle of his party, no Democrat can deny him the place.

Assuming the paramount importance of continuing the control of the Democratic party in the general affairs of the Government, the President would have erred in springing the issue on the country on the eve of a Presidential campaign if the people were not ready to settle it definitely, or did not wish for its immediate consideration. Was he mistaken in believing them ready and desirous to settle it now? When Congress convened on the first Tuesday of December he was reasonably sure of a renomination upon existing issues, and of a re-election. He seized the opportunity of his first message to the new Congress to present the issue of tariff reform as the one issue of the time. He made the question the sole subject of his message. Had his party been unwilling or afraid to second him, and to adopt the issue he had offered them, his act could readily have been accepted as his own political suicide. The leaders of his party in State Governments and in Congress had been, to all appearances, radi-

cally divided on this issue. There was, indeed, an outcry at the first. Yet to-day there is but one conspicuous man within the Democratic ranks who is recognized as irreclaimably hostile to the President's policy, and the leaders elsewhere have declared themselves, with an almost extraordinary unanimity, as his enthusiastic supporters. There can be no valid explanation for this unanimity except that their constituents have warmly indorsed the outspoken declaration of the President that tariff reform is the one great issue of the day.

The truth seems to be that we have all been hopelessly groping in the dark during this last decade as to the real sentiment of the people on this subject. In our elections, except in sporadic instances, it has not been made an issue. Democratic platforms have had a conventional declaration for tariff reform, but Democratic leaders afterward ignored the declaration except when they apologized for it. The platform of 1880 did express itself vigorously, and General Hancock was defeated in this decisive State of New York by a plurality of 21,000 votes; but the party leaders in that case, having committed themselves to an economic revolution, with extraordinary lack of judgment as well as of courage absolutely failed to justify the faith that should have been in them. They feebly retreated their lines before the enemy's attack without so much as a shot in reply. A change of 11,000 votes would have carried the State of New York for Hancock, and would have elected him President. The party suffered all the consequences of its declaration upon the tariff issue. Not a vote that was to be lost because of it was not cast against the party in November, 1880. There is little doubt, in fact, that, if a manly and effective defense of its declaration had been made, the Democratic party would have won the 11,000 votes in this State.

More absorbing issues occupied the attention of the people in 1884. Yet there were significant facts in that election which have not been brought to the attention of the public, but which have a most material bearing upon the question now before us. It was an almost unknown episode of the closing days of the campaign that Governor Cleveland made a speech in New Jersey which very distinctly foreshadowed his tariff message of last month. New Jersey is a State which the timid Democratic managers have believed most sensitive to the question of tariff reduction. It was Senator Randolph, of that State, who procured from General Han-

cock the tariff letter which probably did more than all else to compass his defeat. Yet New Jersey gave Grover Cleveland a substantial majority four years later, after he had expressed himself with perfect clearness and vigor upon the issue which Senator Randolph had so timorously deprecated.

The State of Wisconsin had been a Gibraltar to the Whigs and Republicans since it was admitted to the Union, until the election of three years ago. It gave to Blaine a plurality of 15,000 votes. It gave to Garfield a plurality of 30,000. There was, to all seeming, but one reason for this change. The chairman of the Democratic State Committee in that campaign was Mr. Anderson, an enthusiast on tariff reform, as well as a man of the greatest energy and power of organization. To the National Democratic Committee Wisconsin seemed hopeless. No attention whatever was paid to the welfare of the party in that State. If I am not mistaken, not a dollar of money, a single Democratic speaker, or half a hundred documents were sent into the State. Mr. Anderson was left to conduct the campaign as best he might, and in his own way. Enthusiast that he was, he tried an experiment. In some fashion he obtained the means to have printed great quantities of tariff reform documents. With these he flooded the State from the Illinois border to Lake Superior. Tariff reform was practically the only issue in that State, and the Republican plurality of four years before was cut down by just one-half.

In a less degree, but still a very marked degree, the issue was also the question over in Michigan. When James F. Joy nominated Blaine in the Chicago Convention in 1880, he assured the convention, with some enthusiasm, of Michigan's loyalty to the Maine chieftain. "Yes," answered Senator Conkling, with fine scorn, when he nominated Grant afterward, "any Republican can carry Michigan!" In the campaign of 1884 Michigan also was left to its own devices by the National Committee. Chairman Barnum, protectionist to the degree that James G. Blaine himself is, owned large tracts of mineral lands in the Upper Peninsula, and the company that he controlled employed thousands of men. To a request of the State Committee that he should write a simple letter declaring that, in his opinion, the business interests of the country would not suffer by the election of Grover Cleveland, he returned, so the Committee assured

me at the time, no answer. The Committee made tariff reform its chief issue in that campaign. Ex-Mayor William G. Thompson, of Detroit, and others canvassed the State from limit to limit, and tariff reform was the burden of their speeches. It happened that, in the performance of my own professional duties, I accompanied Mr. Thompson on a part of his tour. The town of Flint is the centre of what, I was informed, was the largest wool district of the country east of Colorado, and of the largest lumber district in the United States. Mr. Thompson was introduced to a great gathering that filled the largest hall in the town, by the candidate for Congress, who was making his own canvass upon a strictly low tariff platform, who had voted against the Converse bill restoring the duty on wool, and for the Morrison bill, admitting lumber to the free list. That candidate, Mr. Winans, was re-elected to Congress in the following election, and never in my own professional experience have I known more enthusiasm in a public gathering than greeted Mr. Thompson's demand for a radical reduction of tariff duties. What was the reason for this apparent anomaly in a community supposed to be wedded to protection? I do not venture to say with authority, except to express the belief that the party managers have made a mistake in assuming that fair discussion anywhere of a cardinal principle of the party would result in losing votes, instead of gaining them.

It is certainly not without significance that in three Congressional districts, assumed to be strongly protective, outspoken tariff reformers were returned at the last election. John Jarrett, the protectionist organizer from Pittsburgh, was sent into the Erie district to oppose the election of Wm. L. Scott. Mr. Scott appeared himself at the Jarrett meetings, and asked for a division of time. When granted he met Mr. Jarrett's arguments seriatim, and made tariff reduction practically the sole issue of his canvass. Upon his counsel and information the President largely relied in preparing his message, and Mr. Scott, as a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, will assist in making the bill to largely reduce tariff duties. So John E. Russell was elected in the Worcester district of Massachusetts, and Leopold Morse from Boston, both taking strong ground for tariff reduction. It is also noteworthy that Republican Congressman Knute Nelson, of Minnesota, is as outspoken for tariff reform as is Chairman Mills,

and that many Republican Senators and Congressmen from the West and Northwest are very doubtful as to the expediency of committing the party, as Mr. Blaine and Mr. Sherman would have it, to the policy of protection, regardless of the surplus. Senator Allison, of Iowa, has definitely declared that "the necessity for a revision of the tariff is great," and Senator Aldrich, of Rhode Island, refers almost with contempt to Mr. Blaine's proposition to distribute the surplus among the States. "None of the propositions," he said in an address to the Providence Board of Trade, "to collect a revenue with a view of dividing it among the States or distributing it by extraordinary expenditures, are, in my opinion, defensible," and added: "It is substantially agreed by all parties that the revenue must be decreased."

But the more significant fact still is the attitude of Republican newspapers of great circulation and influence. The *Chicago Tribune*, the *St. Paul Pioneer-Press*, the *Boston Advertiser*, and the *Providence Journal* take direct issue with the party leaders. Col. A. K. McClure, of the *Philadelphia Times*, himself popularly supposed to lean toward the dominant idea in Pennsylvania, said to an interviewer the other day:

"On a tariff issue as presented by Mr. Cleveland in his message, Massachusetts and Illinois will be about as certain to vote for Cleveland as Missouri, and the approval of the message by such representative Republican journals as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *St. Paul Press*, the *Boston Advertiser*, the *Providence Journal*, and the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, should admonish the Republican leaders that our present oppressive tariff policy cannot be maintained and that the party attempting to maintain it will be defeated."

The Democratic press is practically unanimous in support of the President, and the fact that a newspaper of such great circulation as *The World*, for instance, finds hardly a dissenting voice among its hundreds of thousands of Democratic readers to its earnest advocacy of tariff reduction, is particularly significant as to the sentiment in the party.

On this issue, indeed, it is the Republican party that will be on the defensive in the coming campaign. An extortion of over one hundred millions a year from the pockets of the people will be hard to defend. The Republican leaders seem as hopelessly divided now as were the Democratic leaders four years ago. "I know of no intelligent protectionist or Republican," said Senator Aldrich, "who is not in favor of reducing the annual revenue to such a sum as shall be required to meet the current expenses and

the maturing obligations of the Government." Yet Mr. Blaine, in all probability the next Republican candidate, would reduce taxation only to the amount of the twenty millions or so collected upon tobacco. Opposed himself to free ships for Americans, he actually used as an argument against the Democratic party that "if to-day we had by any chance even such a war as we had with Mexico our enemy *could procure iron-clads in Europe* that would menace our great cities with destruction." Why then should we not be allowed to defend our great cities by iron-clads also freely purchased in Europe?

The manifold and absurd inconsistencies of the tariff will be sufficient material for Democratic speeches before November. The President has made the issue and the party has to all seeming accepted it with unanimity and enthusiasm. The lines are sharply drawn, and it seems only necessary that the organization on the issue which was utterly lacking in 1880 and in 1884 should be made complete for 1888. As I write, a dispatch from Chicago appears in the afternoon papers. It says: "The Executive Committee of the Democratic State Central Committee (of Illinois) met in this city yesterday. The organization of a Northwestern association of tariff-reform Democrats was urgently advocated. From information already received, it was announced that the States of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Kansas, Indiana, and Missouri were fully prepared to join a movement of this nature, and it was decided that such State should be represented by one State Committeeman, to be hereafter selected, whose duty it should be to collect and collate such information on the tariff question as should most thoroughly instruct the workingmen of the country upon this most important question." This is the work that, undertaken as vigorously in every State and Congressional district as is the organization of the Protectionist propaganda, may give the party the electoral votes of Massachusetts, and perhaps three Western and Northwestern States.

One thing, however, is supremely necessary: A protectionist should not again be Chairman of the National Democratic Committee. The President has not only given the party an issue: he has furnished it a leader, and he and his friends will doubtless see to it that the party is not again handicapped by its lieutenants.

BALLARD SMITH.